



*Rudolf Hess and  
His Peace Mission to  
England*

## Rudolf Hess Was Not Insane

*One of the West's most respected soldiers  
tells why*

BY OTTO SKORZENY

**R**UDOLF HESS, the "Prisoner of Peace," is the last remaining prisoner of the Allies. He has been a captive since his courageous flight in 1941 to England, where he wanted to contact old British friends, and hoped to convince the British Government to make peace with Germany.

Earlier this year, on his 80th birthday, his four Allied jailors at Spandau Prison in Berlin didn't even allow his wife and his son to see him.

Hess was condemned at Nuremberg in 1946 to life imprisonment. Many people are asking: For what crime has Rudolf Hess been punished with the heaviest sentence possible?

Some years ago, the chief justice from England in this Nuremberg trial, Lord Shawcross, and the chief justice from the United States, General Taylor, declared that they would never again join such a trial and that

they see it now from an altogether different light than in 1945. Their judgment now would be quite different.

In my opinion, Nuremberg was just a show-trial, where the four victorious powers judged the beaten enemy—Germany.

### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

The author of this article, Col. Otto Skorzeny, is one of the most respected soldiers in the world. A German, his most famous exploit was the rescue of Mussolini from a castle on Santa Madalena Island (northeast of Sardinia) on September 12, 1943, during the height of the war in Italy. In this article, written specially for THE AMERICAN MERCURY, he gives his personal view of Rudolf Hess' mission of peace, for which he is still imprisoned, 29 years after the end of the war.

## Called to Give Testimony

From 1945 to 1947 I was called three times as a witness to Nuremberg. In 1945 I had on four or five occasions seen Rudolf Hess during the daily 15-minute exercise in the courtyard. By chance the guards let me go around, but of course quite separated, with Rudolf Hess. He had always one hand chained to the hand of his guard.

Still today the historical version of the famous flight of Rudolf Hess to England takes it for granted that Adolf Hitler did not know anything about the plan of his second man. As early as 1943 I doubted this version and for very good reasons:

On the 26th of July 1943, General Student and myself received from Adolf Hitler the order to find the imprisoned Mussolini and to rescue him. We followed quite closely the trail of the famous prisoner and in the middle of August I was sure that Mussolini had been brought by the Badoglio Government to the island of Santa Maddalena on the north-eastern corner of Sardinia. All of a sudden we received an order from Hitler's headquarters to prepare for a parachute action against a small island near Elba, where, according to the investigation from Officers of the Canaris-intelligence-organization Mussolini was kept prisoner. We asked immediately for permission to go to the headquarters and to clear up the situation.

We arrived at the headquarters in the evening and were informed that the Führer would receive us in about one hour. We were led into the same room where we were introduced to the Führer for the first time. This time all seats were occupied at the round table near the fireplace.

I had the rare opportunity to meet practically all leading men of Germany. To the left of Hitler sat the foreign minister von Ribbentrop, to

his right was Generalfeldmarschall Keitel, then came Generaloberst Jodl. I received my place next to him. Next to von Ribbentrop sat Himmler, then General Student and next to him Grossadmiral Donitz. Between him and myself sat Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. After some introductory remarks by General Student I was invited to give my presentation of the situation.

## Duce Believed on Santa Maddalena

All eyes rested upon me. The numerous arguments which supported our thesis that the Duce was being held captive on Santa Maddalena made a visible impression. I had spoken for over half an hour. Spontaneously Hitler stood up, gave me his hand and said, "Now I believe you, Hauptsturmführer Skorzeny! You are correct, I hereby withdraw my order for the mission to the island near Elba employing airborne troops. Do you have a plan as to how an attack on the coastal fortress of St. Maddalena can be executed? If so, please continue with your presentation."

I explained that in addition to a flotilla of speedboats, I would need several mine sweepers from the Navy. Also to augment my unit, I would need a company of hand-picked volunteers of the SS Brigade Corsica. Also, the anti-aircraft batteries of the SS Brigade Corsica and those stationed in the northern part of Sardinia were to be available to cover our retreat.

Adolf Hitler then resumed:

"... I approve of your plan and believe that it can be implemented, provided it is executed with boldness and if you all have confidence in your tasks. Now I have to point out one thing to you, Hauptsturmführer Skorzeny. My friend Mussolini must be freed as quickly as possible, otherwise he will be extradited to the Allies. This mission must be imple-

mented very soon. It is possible that I give you the order to go into action while Italy is officially still our ally. In case your mission would fail it could be that I would have to disavow it before the world. Then I would declare that you have annoyed the local headquarters with your crackpot ideas and that you have acted on your own. In the interest of the cause and for the sake of Germany you would have to bear this burden."

### Anticipating Possible Failure

Therefore I am sure that Adolf Hitler had known about the plan of Rudolf Hess. Hitler's disavowal of Hess when the mission failed was agreed to in advance.

Today it is certain, and everyone knows it, that Adolf Hitler wanted peace with England. He therefore even took the risk to send his second in command, Rudolf Hess, to Eng-

land. I am sure that Hess feels still—even today—that he is under order to keep silent.

During the past ten years, there has been a wave of protests all over the world against the four powers who hold Rudolf Hess prisoner in Spandau. Then we have been reading that the three Western Allies would be glad to see Hess released, but the Soviets deny this release. I really doubt that the Russians fear an 80-year-old sick man. If the three Western Powers really wanted to release Hess they could just do that during the month they are the guardians. They could put Hess into a car, get him to the airport and bring him by airplane to Western Germany or to the United States or England and set him free. I am really wondering when one of the Western Powers will have the courage to carry out this deed.

I am sure Russia would not go to war about it.

**Helft ihn Befreien oder seid Schuld an seinem Tod.**

為哈氏改放 或犯殺人罪  
ساعد على تحريره او سن



عيل الا ضلالت وعروا لالمانيا

該罪反對 魯多夫 哈氏 以及德國人民

**Das Verbrechen an Rudolf Hess und Deutschland**

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